

California's Child and Family Services Review System Improvement Plan

County:	Merced
Responsible County Child Welfare Agency:	Human Services Agency
Period of Plan:	October 1, 2004 – September 30, 2005
Period of Outcomes Data:	July 1, 2002 – June 30, 2003
Date Submitted:	September 30, 2004
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Narrative

1. Local Planning Bodies

The Merced County Self-Assessment and Self-Improvement Plan draw on extensive community collaboration. The key method of involving the community has been through the Children's Summit and resulting Children's Action Plan. In addition, the American Humane Association review and the client and community surveys (which are described in the following section under qualitative data) provided extensive feedback from stakeholders throughout the community including clients, staff, community agencies, and public agencies.

We recognize that self-improvement will involve a cultural shift for the agency and its staff. We need to more fully internalize the linkages between child welfare and self-sufficiency; we need to more fully engage with community partners and families to help develop solutions; and we need to promote the education and professionalism of staff. Because we have a relatively undereducated community, it is difficult to recruit professional staff, and as a result we have social workers without college degrees, much less social work training.

In addition, we need a cultural shift in the community at large in order to develop community-wide norms that do not tolerate abuse and violence. We need elected officials, schools, businesses, the media, community organizations, and the faith community to join together to recognize the link between violence of all kinds and the maltreatment of children, and to come together to stop violence.

Merced County Children's Summit

HSA, together with First 5 and the Family Resource Council (FRC), sponsored Merced County's first ever Children's Summit over a two-day period April 30 and May 1, 2004. The purpose of the Children's Summit was to provide information to HSA to assist with the self-assessment for CWS redesign, to help First 5 identify long-term goals, to help HSA develop a seamless model to service all youth of all ages, and to roll out the Child Care Economic Impact report. The Children's Summit included three separate events with a total of 675 participants. It was an enormous undertaking and very successful.

In planning and putting on the Children's Summit, 125 volunteers from throughout the County logged a total of 3,000 volunteer hours. Planning for the Children's Summit began in fall of 2003 when the FRC convened a broad based planning committee which met monthly for 6 months. Early on in the planning process, the planning committee recognized the importance of holding a separate

event for teens in order to better obtain input, and a teen event planning committee was established. The teen event planning committee met regularly and developed a youth-oriented agenda including a dinner, prizes, and a dance as well as 20 small group discussions on 10 topics. A third event was planned for child care providers in order to show appreciation for their contributions and provide information and education as well as obtain feedback for the Children's Action Plan.

The format of the Children's Summit was small group discussions to brainstorm and prioritize action steps. Over 80 volunteers were trained as facilitators and/or scribes for the small group discussions. Discussion groups were established for 20 topics, including after school activities, child abuse prevention, child care, domestic violence, economic self-sufficiency, foster care, health, mental health and coping skills, nutrition, substance abuse, success in school, teen pregnancy prevention, teen relationships, youth crime, and youth development. During these breakout sessions, participants brainstormed and prioritized action steps that were concrete, realistic, and measurable.

The 6-hour event for professionals included keynote speakers and a total of 42 breakout groups facilitated by trained local facilitators and tasked with identifying 2-3 priority action steps.

The 6-hour teen session was held after school on a Friday, from 4:00 to 10:00 p.m. Youth were recruited from throughout the county. The teen session included a pizza dinner, music, and a dance. Before dinner, teens were asked to break into ten groups to identify action steps for 10 topics such as youth development, coordination of youth services, school, foster care, transition at 18, relationship violence, teen pregnancy, and gangs. Groups were facilitated by local experts including a school psychologist, the president of the community college, and the director of an anger management nonprofit. Each topic was covered twice, for a total of 20 groups.

First 5 convened child care providers for an appreciation session on Saturday morning, including breakout groups on 6 topics such as child abuse prevention, special needs and mental health, car seats, asthma, and preschool for all.

In all, a total of 68 small group discussions yielded over 200 action steps, which were disseminated in draft form and prioritized and revised by stakeholders and volunteers to result in the finished plan.

Merced County Children's Action Plan

The findings from the Children's Summit have been synthesized and distilled into a three-year Children's Action Plan to be rolled out September 30, 2004. HSA is the lead agency and will be an integral player in its implementation.

The purpose of the Children's Action Plan is to provide a road map for short and medium term actions that will yield measurable improvements in children's health and well-being. The Children's Action Plan recognizes the richness of our diverse population and the importance of affirming the unique contributions of children and families from all cultures and backgrounds, including different countries of origin, ethnic groups, and languages.

The goals, objectives, and action steps identified in the Children's Action Plan are in alignment with the First 5 Merced County Strategic Plan, the Merced County Human Services Agency (Child Welfare Services redesign including the self-assessment and the self-improvement plan), the P-16 Council, and the Merced County Public Health Department's Health in the Heartland task force.

The Children's Action Plan identifies measurable objectives and concrete, realistic action steps to meet six community goals:

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| Goal 1 | All children and youth will live in a community that does not tolerate abuse or neglect of children or violence in families. |
| Goal 2 | All children and youth will be healthy. |
| Goal 3 | All children will be ready for school and succeed in school. |
| Goal 4 | All families will have access to affordable and high quality child care, including both early care and education and school-age care. |
| Goal 5 | The community will develop and sustain services needed to support and strengthen all children, youth, and families. |
| Goal 6 | All youth will have the opportunity to become healthy and productive adults. |

For each goal, a series of measurable objectives has been developed. There are 21 objectives in all. One of the first steps in implementation will be to develop current data for each objective to use as a baseline. These data will be updated regularly to measure improvement. For each objective, there are concrete action steps designed to be achievable within the three-year timeframe of this report. A total of 71 action steps will be implemented, monitored, and tracked as part of the plan.

The action steps recognize the interrelationships between the challenges facing our children and families. For example, parental substance abuse is a key risk factor for both child abuse and domestic violence. Substance abuse is also linked to gang violence, delinquency, and academic problems. Similarly, families where there is child abuse and neglect often have co-occurring domestic violence between the adult partners. There is also an increasing number of families with children who are gang members who threaten their parents and siblings, many times with weapons. Perhaps most fundamentally, high poverty rates are linked to many of the identified problems, and summit participants recognized the importance of addressing poverty through job training and skills development as well as building the economic base of the County.

One key action step found throughout the plan is to increase public awareness about both the problems and the solutions. Other key steps include launching a Children's Health Initiative to provide health insurance for all children, developing a family drug court, increasing substance abuse treatment for parents as well as teens, looking into the feasibility of developing a children's shelter, establishing transitional housing for foster youth, providing mentoring and peer support for foster families and youth, and phasing in preschool for all. Accomplishing each of these will require broad based community support. Many of the action steps will require new resources, and it is hoped that the Children's Action Plan will provide support to grant requests to obtain the needed resources.

The Children's Action Plan will be implemented by a broad-based collaborative of community agencies, including public agencies, education, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, business, the media, and community volunteers. It is our intent to implement 90% of the action steps by December 2007. We also recognize the need to develop capacity within the public and private agencies that will be responsible for carrying out the action steps. In fact, many of the action steps cannot be carried out until the infrastructure is developed. The Children's Action Plan helps us to focus on actions steps we can take, and put the infrastructure in place to make sure we succeed.

The first step is that in September 2004, the Family Resource Council will convene a small working group called the Children's Action Core Team. The Core Team will build capacity, facilitate action, facilitate funding, and serve as a clearinghouse for communication. One of the first orders of business for the Core Team is to develop baseline community-wide data on each of the 21 objectives. By December 2004, this data will be compiled into a central location.

Between October and December 2004, the Core Team will develop a work plan for each action step and convene an Action Step Team including a facilitating agency for the action step. The Action Step Team will be accountable for completing the action step and reporting back to the Core Team and other stakeholders on a quarterly basis.

In Spring 2005, there will be an educational forum to share best practices in selected areas based on action steps that are underway, to help build capacity among service providers as well as provide public education and information. In Spring 2006, the Core Team will hold a follow-up Children's Summit to review progress on each of the action steps and objectives.

2. Findings that support qualitative change

HSA has initiated three assessments that provide findings to support qualitative change; a review by the American Humane Association, a client survey, and a

community survey. Findings and recommendations have been identified in the Self-Assessment and incorporated into the SIP.

American Humane Association Review

From February through May 2004, the American Humane Association (AHA) undertook the first segment of a two-part internal review of Merced County Child Welfare Services. The goal was to identify specific issues that called for more in-depth investigation and to identify short-term recommendations for service delivery improvement. The review entailed reviewing written materials, surveying staff, and interviewing and holding focus groups with staff and external stakeholders. On-site collection of information included individual interviews with 9 supervisors, 8 focus groups with a total of 43 social workers, and interviews with community agencies and collaborating partners.

Some of the key findings leading to recommendations for change include:

- Organizational Culture: Staff and supervisors feel that the emphasis on paperwork compliance has led to a punitive atmosphere. The recommendation is to link compliance with good outcomes for children, and also to highlight and celebrate successes both on the part of individual employees and the agency as a whole.
- Supervision: Supervisors and program administrators spend too much time in meetings and as a result do not have enough time to work with staff. The recommendation is to review meeting requirements, for example requiring that a supervisor attend staffings only if they have a case there, or providing that different supervisors attend different meetings rather than all attending.
- Communication: Community partners do not always understand the roles and responsibilities, including confidentiality safeguards, required of CWS, and staff do not always understand policy and procedural changes which sometimes are revised after being sent out. The recommendation is to educate community partners and the public about the role of CWS, and within the agency to revise communication including minutes of supervisors meetings and other regularly scheduled meetings, as well as for supervisors and Program Administrators to revise and review draft policy and procedure before disseminating to staff.
- Training: Because of workload and time pressures, new social workers do not always have the opportunity to complete the required training, although agency policy calls for decreased workloads for new workers. The recommendation is to ensure reduced workloads for new staff and staff who transfer to a new unit, and require that their Core Training be completed within a specified time period.
- Community Resources: The availability and quality of community resources, especially mental health services, substance abuse treatment, parenting classes, and foster homes was the top concern identified by

social workers and the second biggest issue for supervisors. The recommendations are to work through the Children's Action Plan to build awareness of the need for services, identify ways to increase substance abuse treatment for parents and mental health services for children, and look at increasing staffing to recruit more foster homes.

- Workload: Workload issues were the greatest concern for supervisors and the second highest for social workers. The recommendations are to hire clerical support, reduce supervisor time in meetings, develop standard practice and training expectations in writing for social workers and supervisors, and make sure social workers are able to complete their work during the regular business day.

Client Surveys

All active Family Reunification (FR) and Family Maintenance (FM) parents as well as foster parents were surveyed in 2003. A total of 62 client surveys were returned, including 9 from parents in FR, 34 from parents in FM, and 18 from foster parents.

More than three-fourths of parents in the FM program reported they had contact with the social worker in the previous two months, typically with two or more visits. More than two-thirds reported the social worker had asked about the child's needs during the past month, and had provided assistance more than 80% of the time. Social workers had also discussed needs of the siblings and other children in the home, and helped to address these needs. Sixty percent of parents reported the social worker had asked about their own needs in the previous month, and 50% rated their social worker as very helpful, giving them a 9 or 10 on a scale of 0 to 10.

Among parents in the FR program, 56% reported having been visited by a social worker in the previous two months, typically with one visit. Almost half reported the social worker had asked after their children's needs in the previous month. Fifty-seven percent said a social worker had not talked to them about how to get their children back; less than a quarter rated their social worker a 9 or 10 on a scale of 1 to 10. More than half reported the child was consulted in developing the plan, but fewer than half said the services requested by the child were included. Only forty-five percent reported that the social worker had involved them in changing the case plan, and only 40% said the children were involved. Almost three fourths of the children had siblings, but a third of those with siblings in another home had not had contact with their sibling during the previous year. Two-thirds of the school-aged children changed schools when they went into foster care. Three-fourths did not participate in sports.

Three-fourths of foster parents reported contact with the social worker in the past month, and 64% reported that their foster child had contact with his or her siblings in the previous month. More than two-thirds indicated that the social worker had talked about the child's needs in the previous month, and 80% had helped meet the identified needs. Sixty percent said the social worker had discussed the foster parent needs in the previous month. Fifty-six percent of foster parents rated the social worker as very helpful, rating 9 or 10 on a 10 point scale.

Community Surveys

When HSA surveyed community agencies in 2003, 31 surveys were returned. Among community agencies, 78% reported receiving referrals from HSA. The agencies serve a diverse group of clients, representing several languages. Almost two-thirds of agencies offer multicultural events, with over half indicating an event in the past 6 months. They reported clients needing health services, education, child care, and work related services. Most agencies reported that they sought and used client feedback. Agencies reported the need for staff training as well as capacity building in all areas – fiscal capacity, fund raising, financial management, human resources and agency management. Most agencies reported the challenge of sufficient funding as well as having enough staff. Fifty-six percent reported receiving some of the help they needed, but only 3% received all they needed.

3. Summary Assessment Section of County Self-Assessment (this section is from Self-Assessment Submitted to CDSS June 30, 2004)

A. Discussion of System Strengths and Areas Needing Improvement – Child Welfare System

1. Strengths

- a. In spite of its challenging demographics and socioeconomics, Merced County performs better than the state as a whole on a number of child welfare outcomes:
 - Short length of stay in foster homes
 - Small number in foster care at any point in time
 - High rate of reunification
 - Placement stability
 - Low rate of re-entry to foster care,
 - Good placement with siblings
 - Efficient turnaround on adoptions
 - Timely responses (immediate and 10 day)

- b. This self-assessment has identified the efficiency and effectiveness of a number of CWS services and programs:
 - Emergency Response
 - Voluntary Family Maintenance
 - Family Reunification
 - Adoptions
- c. CWS has developed and maintained strong and effective community partnerships:
 - Involvement in numerous collaborations for prevention as well as intervention
 - Good relations with probation and the court
 - Outstationed workers and reciprocal relationships with several county departments
 - Strong relationships with community partners at the management level

2. Need improvement

- a. The following areas have been identified for improvement in child outcomes:
 - High rate of referrals
 - High rate of substantiated allegations
 - High foster care entry rate
 - Recurrence of maltreatment
 - Abuse in foster homes (although this may be a statistical fluke)
 - Abuse when child is not removed from home
 - Recidivism of abuse
 - Relatively few relative placements and relatively many FFA placements
 - ILP outcomes
- b. There are several areas where services/programs need improvement:
 - Lack of substance abuse treatment for parents
 - Lack of mental health treatment for children and youth
 - Lack of foster homes and support for them
 - Lack of awareness in the community of child abuse, how to prevent and report it, and the role of CWS
 - Internally, the need to balance workloads and standardize training and communication.

c. Areas needing improvement in community partnerships include:

- stronger relationships at staff level with community partners
- stronger relationships with regional Centers.

B. Discussion of System Strengths and Areas Needing Improvement – Probation

1. Strengths

The County is rich in front-end services. Children who are referred for the first time are handled by appropriate agencies that often work in concert, to assist entire families. However, for those juveniles who continue through the justice system, becoming more deeply mired in misbehavior, the available resources diminish. It is ironic and unfortunate that services decrease as the intensity of the delinquency problem increases.

One of Merced County's strengths is the extensive network of collaborations. With regard to placements, that collaboration begins with the Placement Council wherein prospective placements are reviewed by a multi-agency team to assess the possibility of local treatment vs. out-of-home treatment. The Youth Specialty Services, which includes a probation officer, extends more intensive supervision of minors who are in higher levels of placement. The Probation system also works with the parents, as well as placement wards, to strengthen the family prior to the ward's return home. More than 100 Probation volunteers provide many services that would not be available without them.

More intensive aftercare is provided by a probation officer who supervises the entire family and coordinates the Parent Accountability Board, to lessen the possibility of a return to old habits.

2. Need improvement

A major limitation of the local justice system is its inability to "hold" juveniles in custody when they are presenting a risk to the community. Following arrest and removal from the streets, they have not been kept in juvenile hall because of insufficient bed space. That deficiency was also reflected in the probation officers' limited ability to arrest and detain wards who have violated their Court-ordered conditions of supervision. It is well known among juvenile offenders that they will most likely not immediately serve time, either when first arrested or when ordered into custody by the Juvenile Court.

There are also insufficient resources for those juveniles who require intensive supervision and few means for probation officers to enforce the Court's orders. The only current options for the Juvenile Court are to order juvenile hall confinement (which is drastically limited, due to the facility's lack of space); place the minor, if he or she meets the stringent guidelines, in the Partnership for Adolescent Success (PAS) program; send the minor to an out-of-home placement; or commit him or her to the California Youth Authority. There is no program aimed at delinquents who do not fit those criteria and who fall between out-of-home placement and commitment to the California Youth Authority. A camp placement would be appropriate for a large percentage, but fiscal constraints do not allow that as an option.

Because of fiscal constraints, Probation has encouraged and participated in collaborations in order to maximize the use of resources. Grant funding has also been sought, and awarded, for special programs designed to intervene in juveniles' lives and prevent out-of-home placement. Volunteers have proven to be a financially prudent means of increasing Probation manpower, while engaging the community in ownership of the juvenile justice system problems.

In its studies, the Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council found that the lack of local resources was resulting in out-of-county placements for many minors. Additional pre-placement programs, including the ability to hold offenders in custody, would greatly reduce the numbers being removed from their homes and placed in other counties.

The major area needing improvement is the area of Court paperwork and various reviews required according to Division 31. Officers are comfortable with case planning and are becoming more proficient in the preparation of reviews, to include those elements that are required for Dependent Children who come within Section 300 of the Welfare and Institutions Code. However, since adoption of Probation wards is extremely rare, officers are unfamiliar with many of the pre-adoption procedures.

For placement of minors who require higher levels of care, or hospitalization, it is often difficult to place them due to the lack of funding.

C. Areas for Further Exploration through the Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR)

HSA has identified five areas of improvement where CWS would benefit from the PQCR. Probation will provide a member to the team devised by the Human Services Agency, if appropriate.

1. Community resources: There is a need for additional foster homes including a system to support existing foster parents, as well as the need for systems to help social workers identify a foster home rather than selecting a foster family agency for placement
2. Community resources: There is a need for additional treatment for parental and child substance abuse, including resources for additional treatment facilities.
3. Community resources: There is a need for mental health services for children.
4. Youth transition to independence: Because the college and vocational school enrollment rate countywide is low, and unemployment is high, ILP youth are less likely to graduate from high school and go on to college, vocational school, or a job.
5. Agency workforce: HSA values education; however there are people with high school diplomas doing social work because of a dearth of qualified applicants. CWS would benefit from creative strategies for recruiting more highly skilled staff as well as providing training and education for current staff.

4. SIP Templates for Improvement

Six templates are included in the next section of the County's Self-Improvement Plan:

- **Template 1. Referrals and Substantiated Referrals** (Outcomes *Referrals* and *Substantiated Referrals*: SIP Goals 1 and 2)
- **Template 2. Foster Care** (Outcomes *Rate of First Entries to Foster Care*, *1C Rate of Abuse/Neglect in Foster Care*, and *4B Placement/Least Restrictive Setting*: SIP Goals 3-5)
- **Template 3. Recurrence of Maltreatment** (Outcomes *Recurrence of Maltreatment*. *1A Recurrence of Maltreatment in six months (federal)*. *1B. Recurrence of maltreatment in 12 months (state)*. *2A Recurrence of Maltreatment in Homes Where Child(ren) Not Removed*: SIP Goal 6)
- **Template 4. Youth Transitioning to Adulthood** (Outcome *8A Youth Transitioning to Self-Sufficient Adulthood*: SIP Goals 7-8)
- **Template 5. Internal CWS** (*2B Timely Response to Referrals*; *2C Timely Social Worker Visits with Child*; improving supervision, training and communication, balancing workloads: SIP Goals 9-14)

➤ **Template 6. Probation** (SIP Goals 15-19)

Template 1. Outcomes: Substantiated Referrals**County's Current Performance:**

The rate of child maltreatment referrals was 79.4 per 1,000 in FY 02-03, 38% higher than the statewide rate, and it has been higher historically as well. The rate of substantiated referrals was 21 per 1,000 in FY 02-03, 72% higher than the statewide rate, and it has been higher historically as well. It should be noted that the number of referrals doesn't simply reflect child maltreatment, but it also reflects community awareness of child abuse and neglect, and that mandated reporters and residents understand when and how to report child maltreatment. More community awareness may well lead to an increase in referrals.

Improvement Goal 1.0

Increase public awareness of child maltreatment, domestic violence, animal abuse, parental substance abuse, and the link with child maltreatment.

Strategy 1. 1

Develop and implement a series of public awareness campaigns-multilingual and multicultural – on:

- (1) child abuse, child abuse prevention, and mandated reporting;
- (2) the role and responsibilities of Child Welfare Services;
- (3) domestic violence, its effects on child witnesses, and the link with child abuse;
- (4) the link between animal abuse, family violence, and other violence in the community; and
- (5) the effects of parental substance abuse on children and the link with child abuse and domestic violence.

Strategy Rationale

These are Action Steps in Children's Action Plan. Helping the public better understand child maltreatment and the role of CWS may increase the number of reports initially, but in the long run will better engage all community members in addressing child abuse and neglect. Helping the public better understand the relationship between intimate partner violence and child abuse/neglect, as well as the link with animal abuse, will increase public recognition of these problems. It is important for the public to recognize that parental substance abuse is a risk factor for family violence, as a first step in supporting additional resources.

Milestone	1.1.1 Identify goals and target audience of public education campaigns and how to coordinate the topics	Timeframe	January – March 2005	Assigned to	Children's Action Plan Action Step Team; lead is Human Services Agency
	1.1.2 Identify funding for campaign and PR firm to carry it out		January – July 2005		Children's Action Plan Action Step Team
	1.1.3 Initiate campaign		August - September 2005		Children's Action Plan Action Step Team

Improvement Goal 2.0: Reduce the rate of substantiated referrals.				
Strategy 2.1 Enhance differential response capacity to provide a more comprehensive assessment of family needs at intake into CWS		Strategy Rationale Merced County is in the planning stage for differential response. Building on the Linkages model, enhanced differential response is a developing strategy for improving responsiveness to all children and further coordinating services between CWS, CalWORKs, and community partners. The intent is that whenever there is a report to CWS, the family will be assessed and services offered through HSA or a community-based organization. There will no longer be any referrals evaluated out. Linkages provides the model for differential response.		
Milestone	2.1.1 Review and revise Structured Decision Making tool for eligibility workers developed by Orange County.	Timeframe	October – December 2004	Assigned to Program Administrators
	2.1.2 Eligibility workers trained to use SDM to assess risk and family strengths, and identify families that can be referred to CWS for services or to outside agencies. Social workers trained to understand eligibility requirements so that they can refer families to CalWORKs if appropriate.		January – June 2005	
	2.1.3 Stronger network of community based organizations as community partners for children and families at risk or in trouble.		January - September 2005	
Notes: Key to reducing abuse is a combination of public awareness, enhanced response to reports of child abuse and neglect, and more community resources such as parent classes and substance abuse treatment.				
Describe systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goal. Internally at HSA as well as with community agencies, increasing differential response will require new collaborative relationships between staff including Memoranda of Understanding. The lack of community resources results in large part from insufficient public and private funding to meet the needs of Merced County residents. As one of the poorest counties in the State, the needs are often greater and the resources fewer. State budget cuts have hit the county hard, and it is difficult to find discretionary dollars for service expansion. We also lack private resources; for example, we have no local Community Foundation although one is in the planning stages.				
Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals. The importance of building public awareness through public education is a theme throughout the Children’s Action Plan. Internal to HSA, staff training on Structured Decision Making is necessary.				
Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals. A Woman’s Place, the Animal Shelter, the local media, and other community partners will be important in building public awareness.				
Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals. None				

Template 2. Outcome: Rate of first entries to foster care. 1C Rate of Abuse/Neglect in Foster Care. 4B Placement in Least Restrictive Setting.

County's Current Performance:

At 3.4 per 1,000 in FY 02-03, the rate of first entries to foster care is 17% higher in Merced County than statewide. In terms of abuse in foster care, from 1998 to 2001 this ranged from .48% to .54%, below the federal standard of .57%. However, during the study period 10/02-6/03, Merced County's rate was 1.18%. In terms of type of placement, Merced County places proportionately fewer children with kin and more with foster family agencies compared to the state as a whole. Because of the high rate of substance abuse, it is sometimes difficult to find a suitable relative placement. Social workers complete a large number of relative assessments, but often the family is not approved because of a drug or criminal history.

Improvement Goal 3.0

Reduce the rate of first entries to foster care by providing community-based family-supporting services.

Strategy 3. 1 Build staff-level relationships with community partners including regional centers		Strategy Rationale Department and agency heads and top management have developed strong collaborative relationships. However, these do not always translate easily to line staff. It is important for front-line social workers to have solid working relationships with staff from other public agencies, schools, community organizations, and regional centers in order to provide a better understanding of alternatives to out of home placement.			
Milestone	3.1.1 Identify collaborative meetings and agencies to focus on	Timeframe	October-December 2004	Assigned to	CWS Program Administrators
	3.1.2 Assign staff to attend collaborative meetings and report back		January – March 2005		CWS Program Administrators
	3.1.3 Establish ongoing staff-level forum to share information		April- July 2005		CWS Program Administrators and other agency partners
Strategy 3. 2 Develop cross-training for social services, health, education, law enforcement, and community based organizations to better understand each other’s roles and responsibilities.		Strategy Rationale This is an Action Step in Children’s Action Plan. Many young people come to the attention of multiple agencies that do not fully understand each other’s roles. As staff better understand each other’s agencies, they can make more appropriate referrals and follow-up on them, and some children can be kept more safely in the home.			
Milestone	3.2.1. Identify agencies to participate in cross-training	Timeframe	January-March 2005	Assigned to	Children’s Action Plan Action Step Team
	3.2.2 Develop curricula and training modules		April-September 2005		Children’s Action Plan Action Step Team
	3.2.3 Plan and set timeline to implement training		September 2005		Children’s Action Plan Action Step Team

Improvement Goal 4.0 Reduce the rate of abuse in foster homes to .53% by recruiting and supporting foster parents.					
Strategy 4. 1 Undertake a campaign to recruit more foster parents.		Strategy Rationale This is an Action Step in the Children's Action Plan. The shortage of local foster homes results in more children being placed with FFAs, which are more expensive and also more difficult to monitor.			
Milestone	4.1.1 Identify best practice models in other communities	Timeframe	October – December 2004	Assigned to	Children's Action Plan Action Step Team; lead is Human Services Agency
	4.1.2 Identify resources of additional staff and outreach needed		January – June 2005		Children's Action Plan Action Step Team
	4.1.3 Plan and initiate recruitment campaign		July – September 2005		Children's Action Plan Action Step Team
Strategy 4. 2 Develop and implement mentoring and peer support for foster parents.		Strategy Rationale This is an Action Step in the Children's Action Plan. Mentoring and peer support will improve foster parent morale, improve the quality of foster care, improve retention of foster parents, and keep children in foster care safer.			
Milestone	4.2.1. Review best practice models from other counties and states	Timeframe	January – June 2005	Assigned to	Children's Action Plan Action Step Team; lead is Human Services Agency
	4.2.2 Develop local plan incorporating best practices		July – September 2005		Children's Action Plan Action Step Team
	4.2.3 Begin to explore possible resources to support mentoring		September 2005		Children's Action Plan Action Step Team
Strategy 4 3 Establish a task force to improve communication with foster parents and incorporate them into decision-making.		Strategy Rationale This is an Action Step in the Children's Action Plan. This will help improve coordination and responsiveness to the needs of the foster child.			
Milestone	4.3.1 Establish task force with members from foster parent association, CWS line staff, and program supervisors and managers	Timeframe	October-December 2004	Assigned to	Children's Action Plan Action Step Team; lead is Human Services Agency
	4.3.2 Review and improve policies and procedures for foster parent involvement in case planning		January-March 2005		Children's Action Plan Action Step Team

	4.3.3 Foster parents and CWS staff will; be trained on new policies and procedures for foster parent involvement		April-July 2004		Children's Action Plan Action Step Team
Strategy 4. 4 Conduct a feasibility study for a children's shelter/receiving home for intake and complete assessment (medical, mental health, and social) for up to 30 days.		Strategy Rationale This is an Action Step in the Children's Action Plan. A shelter or receiving home will allow the time for a more through assessment and help foster parents be more responsive to the needs of the child.			
Milestone	4.4.1 Identify funding for feasibility study	Timeframe	January-June 2005	Assigned to	Children's Action Plan Action Step Team ; lead is Human Services Agency
	4.4.2 Identify parameters of feasibility study and develop RFP		January-June 2005		Children's Action Plan Action Step Team.
	4.4.3 Identify and contract with consultant to carry out feasibility study		July - September 2005		Children's Action Plan Action Step Team.
Improvement Goal 5.0 Decrease the percentage of foster family agency placements					
Strategy 5. 1 Train CWS and Probation staff to exhaust local placement options prior to contacting FFAs.		Strategy Rationale Social workers find it is easier to place a foster child through an FFA compared to phoning individual potential foster homes. But FFAs are more expensive and the county has less oversight as compared to county-licensed foster homes. Probation officers need training and tools to assess potential placements, including relative placements.			
Milestone	5.1.1 Draft policies on kinship and FFA placements	Timeframe	January-March 2005	Assigned to	HSA and Probation
	5.1.2 Review and revise draft policies		April - June 2005		HSA and Probation
	5.1.3 CWS and Probation staff will be trained on new policies.		July - September 2005		HSA and Probation

Notes:

We will continue with early intervention services in the form of Voluntary Family Maintenance and the use of family resource centers and other regional collaborative partners to identify alternatives to placement. The Action Steps identified in the Children's Action Plan will be implemented and tracked as a part of the Children's Action Plan, with quarterly progress reports to the Children's Action Core Team.

Describe systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goal.

The lack of community resources results in large part from insufficient public and private funding to meet the needs of Merced County residents. As one of the poorest counties in the State, the needs are often greater and the resources fewer. State budget cuts have hit the county hard, and it is difficult to find discretionary dollars for service expansion. We also lack private resources; for example, we have no local Community Foundation although one is in the planning stages.

Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals.

Staff from CWS as well as other public agencies, schools, and community based organizations need to be cross-trained on each other's roles and responsibilities in order to better understand when to refer clients and what services they can receive.

Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals.

Key partners include CWS program administrators and supervisors; County Mental Health including Drug and Alcohol; the Foster Parent Association; community agencies; and Central Valley Regional Center.

Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals.

None

Template 3. Outcomes: Recurrence of Maltreatment. 1A Recurrence of Maltreatment in six months (federal). 1B. Recurrence of maltreatment in 12 months (state). 2A Rate of Recurrence of Maltreatment in Homes Where Child(ren) Not Removed					
County’s Current Performance: Recurrence of maltreatment for children abused/neglected July-Dec 2002 was 10.7% in 6 months, compared to 11.2% statewide and national standard of 6.1%. For those maltreated FY 01-02, 12-month reoccurrence was 19.2% in Merced County compared to 14.6% statewide. Those with a first substantiated allegation FY 01-02, the county’s re-abuse rate was 15.7% compared to 12.9% statewide. In Merced County, children not removed from their homes are 67% more likely to be re-abused than statewide. (15.4% compared to 9.5%, in FY 01-02)					
Improvement Goal 6.0 Reduce the rate of recurrence of maltreatment in 12 months to 8.9% (1B), and to 21% for child(ren) not removed from the home (2A).					
Strategy 6.1 Develop and implement a culturally appropriate and behaviorally measurable parent education model for abusive parents.			Strategy Rationale This is an Action Step in the Children’s Action Plan. It is essential to identify the most effective way to work with abusive parents or those at risk of abuse.		
Milestone	6.1.1 Identify best practice models from other communities	Timeframe	January – March 2005	Assigned to	Children’s Action Plan Action Step Team; lead is Human Services Agency
	6.1.2 Develop pilot parent education model, adapted to the local community		April – July 2005		Children’s Action Plan Action Step Team
	6.1.3 Begin to test parent education model		August - September 2005		Children’s Action Plan Action Step Team
Strategy 6.2 Develop a treatment facility (residential and outpatient) for substance abusing parents that includes medical evaluation, mental health and psychosocial assessment, and intensive treatment that addresses all identified issues.			Strategy Rationale This is an Action Step in the Children’s Action Plan. Additional treatment will help reduce parental substance abuse and the resulting family violence.		
Milestone	6.2.1 Identify funding needs	Timeframe	January-July 2005	Assigned to	Children’s Action Plan Action Step Team; lead is County Alcohol and Other Drug
	6.2.2 Identify site		January-July 2005		Children’s Action Plan Action Step Team
	6.2.3 Develop plan for funding and development of facility		August - September 2005		Children’s Action Plan Action Step Team

Strategy 6. 3 Develop a multidisciplinary forum to staff families where children are not removed from the home, inviting families to participate.			Strategy Rationale Families where children who have been abused/neglected or are at risk of abuse/neglect often have multiple challenges and are involved with multiple public agencies and community organizations. Multidisciplinary staffing is an effective way to identify and build on family needs and strengths.		
Milestone	6.3.1. Research best practices and models in other counties	Timeframe	January-June 2005	Assigned to	CWS Program Administrators
	6.3.2 Identify and involve other agency partners		July 2005		CWS Program Administrators
	6.3.3 Develop preliminary plan for multidisciplinary staffing		August - September 2005		CWS Program Administrators
Notes: Substance abuse is a key risk factor for family violence and requires a multi-agency, multi-disciplinary effort to address it. Linkages has been very successful as a tool for service integration, reducing child maltreatment through early identification of risk factors.					
Describe systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goal. It is important to involve other service providers to provide wraparound services for families who have abused or neglected their children. Child welfare services needs to become less isolated and work in partnership with other public and private agencies, building on current successful collaborations.					
Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals. Staff need to be trained to understand and accept the perspectives of those from other disciplines.					
Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals. Drug and Alcohol services, and community agencies that provide parenting support are key partners.					
Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals. Resolving confidentiality issues during multidisciplinary work is always difficult.					

Template 4. Outcome: 8A Youth Transitioning to Self-Sufficient Adulthood					
County's Current Performance: From 10/01-9/02, 264 foster youth in Merced County received ILP services. Of these, 13% received a high school diploma (compared to 21% statewide), 6% enrolled in college or higher education (compared to 14% statewide), 11% completed vocational training (compared to 6% statewide), and 6% were employed or had another means of support (compared to 24% statewide). Overall, Merced County has high unemployment, high poverty rates, and low college or vocational school enrollment rates for youth.					
Improvement Goal 7.0 Increase the enrollment of foster youth in ILP and provide robust and comprehensive services					
Strategy 7. 1 Develop a one-stop youth resource center with links to jobs, schools, peer support, counseling, mentoring, and social/recreational opportunities.			Strategy Rationale This is an Action Step in the Children's Action Plan. We need to reduce duplication and increase coordination in order to better reach foster youth. We need to be as effective as possible in using limited community resources.		
Milestone	7.1.1 Develop baseline counts for all HSA programs that serve youth, identifying the number of foster youth ages 15 and older and determining how many are jointly enrolled in ILP or other services. This includes Probation wards, and it includes youth placed out of county.	Timeframe	October – December 2004	Assigned to	Children's Action Plan Action Step Team; lead is Human Services Agency
	7.1.2 Identify site for co-located services		January – June 2005		Children's Action Plan Action Step Team
	7.1.3 Develop plan for coordination and management of youth resource center		July – September 2005		Children's Action Plan Action Step Team
Strategy 7. 2 Develop a system to ensure that emancipating youth have important documents such as birth certificates and medical information when they leave foster care.			Strategy Rationale This is an Action Step in the Children's Action Plan, suggested by youth including foster youth at the Teen Summit. These important documents need to be in the possession of the emancipating youth as they are often requested or required by employers, health care providers, schools, and other officials.		
Milestone	7.2.1. Survey foster parents, group home managers, foster youth, and social workers to see what systems (if any) are currently in place to provide important documents to emancipating youth	Timeframe	October – December 2004	Assigned to	Children's Action Plan Action Step Team; lead is Human Services Agency with ILP
	7.2.2 Develop or improve system.		January – June 2005		Children's Action Plan Action Step Team
	7.2.3 Foster youth, social workers, and foster care/group home staff will be trained and new system implemented		July – September 2005		Children's Action Plan Action Step Team

Strategy 7. 3 Provide foster youth with help budgeting, paying bills, savings accounts, employment assistance, living skills, and how to take care of the home.		Strategy Rationale This is an Action Step in the Children’s Action Plan, suggested by youth including foster youth at the Teen Summit. ILP provides assistance in these areas, but youth are suggesting we do better.			
Milestone	7.3.1 Undertake focused needs assessment with foster youth through interviews and focus groups to identify areas for improvement in the current ILP offerings.	Timeframe	October – December 2004	Assigned to	Children’s Action Plan Action Step Team; lead is Human Services Agency and ILP
	7.3.2 Develop new curriculum modules for ILP youth		January – June 2005		Children’s Action Plan Action Step Team
	7.3.3 ILP youth will be trained using new curricula.		July – September 2005		Children’s Action Plan Action Step Team
Improvement Goal 8.0 Increase the percentages of emancipating foster children who graduate high school, enroll in higher education, or get jobs or have other means of support.					
Strategy 8.1 Develop a transitional home for foster youth transitioning at age 18 and homeless teens.		Strategy Rationale This is an Action Step in the Children’s Action Plan. A very high proportion of emancipating foster youth end up homeless. In 2001, 78% of emancipating foster youth in our 12-county region needed housing. The Coalition for Affordable Housing has been working on this issue and will be an integral partner.			
Milestone	8.1.1 Identify potential funding	Timeframe	October 2004 – July 2005	Assigned to	Children’s Action Plan Action Step Team; lead is Human Services Agency.
	8.1.2 Explore potential sites		October 2004 – July 2005		Children’s Action Plan Action Step Team
	8.1.3 Complete feasibility report		September 2005		Children’s Action Plan Action Step Team.
Strategy 8. 2 Improve communication and collaboration between CWS and schools to assist foster youth		Strategy Rationale Foster youth need special support at school to help them overcome poor academic performance stemming from the trauma of abuse/neglect, lack of parental support for education, changing schools when they change foster settings, and oftentimes underlying emotional, cognitive or behavioral problems. School districts have identified liaison staff to work with foster youth, allowing a forum for identifying how to make improvements in coordination.			

Milestone	8.2.1 Set up special multidisciplinary school-based team with Merced Union High School District to focus on foster youth, using identified school liaison staff.	Timeframe	October 2004 – March 2005	Assigned to	CWS Program Administrators and MUHSD administrators, and Probation
	8.2.2 Set up system for school-based case review and staffing of foster children, identifying their needs in and out of school, and making a plan to address those needs		April –July 2005		Multidisciplinary school-based team
	8.2.3 20 foster children in high school will have been staffed by multidisciplinary school-based and school focused team		August-September 2005		Multidisciplinary school-based team
Strategy 8.3 Improve coordination of employment and career services between schools, foster care, CWS, ROP, and WIA for foster youth ages 15 and older		Strategy Rationale Although there are many services for foster youth, they are not always well-coordinated; the schools, foster caregivers, CWS, ROP, and WIA do not always communicate with each other about the individual needs of each youth. Foster children have few mentoring and role models in the world of work; ROP and WIA can provide employment training and job-linked assistance			
Milestone	8.3.1 Establish workgroup including CWS, ILP, ROP, and WIA to discuss program coordination	Timeframe	October – December 2004	Assigned to	CWS Program Administrators
	8.3.2 Identify methods to improve services and coordination of services for foster youth		January – June 2005		Workgroup
	8.3.3 Begin to implement recommendations		July – September 2005		Workgroup
Notes: One of the biggest challenges in helping foster youth become self-sufficient adults is that the county has high poverty and unemployment rates and low literacy and education levels. Foster youth have additional challenges in an already difficult job market.					
Describe systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goal. Collaboration and coordination of services is always a challenge, because each agency has its own perspective and role. Setting up and maintaining collaborative systems is very time-consuming, Staff are already working to capacity, and it is difficult to find the time for additional meetings.					
Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals. Staff from CWS (social workers, supervisors, and program administrators) and Probation need a better understanding of schools and employment issues. School staff need to know more about the foster care system and the needs of young people in foster care.					
Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals. HSA contracts with Merced College to implement the ILP program. The Merced Union High School District is also a partner agency, as is the Merced County Office of Education, and Probation.					
Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals. Client confidentiality is an obstacle. It would be helpful to be able to share information between CWS and the schools and employment programs in order to help schools better understand how to support enrolled foster children.					

Template 5. Outcome: (2B Timely Response to Referrals; 2C Timely Social Worker Visits with Child Systemic Factors: Internal CWS: improve supervision, training and communication.						
County's Current Performance: According to CWS/CMS data, a slightly smaller proportion of social workers in Merced County are in compliance with the requirement for a monthly visit compared to statewide. In April 2003, there were 59% timely visits in Merced County compared to 67% statewide; in May 2003 there were 65% in Merced County compared to 69% statewide; and in June there were 68% in Merced County compared to 72% statewide. In addition, according to the American Humane Society (AHAHA) Review, there are several areas for improvement in CWS management and workflow.						
Improvement Goal 9.0 Increase the percentage of timely responses to referrals and timely social worker visits to 90%						
Strategy 9.1 Ensure that staff enter visits into CWS/CMS			Strategy Rationale This may be a result of the fact that workers are not always coding their visits in CWS/CMS, or not making contacts.			
Milestone	9.1.1 Through interviews with workers and supervisors, analyze whether or not workers are entering visits into CWS/CMS and also whether they are making contacts.		Timeframe	October – December 2004	Assigned to	CWS Program Administrators
	9.1.2 Develop and implement training on the importance of timely visits.			January – March 2005		CWS Supervisors
	9.1.3 Social workers trained on how to enter visits into CWS/CMS.			January – March 2005		CWS Supervisors
Improvement Goal 10.0 Foster organizational culture that supports and rewards positive effort and outcomes						
Strategy 10.1 Establish internal workgroup or “morale committee” of key social workers and supervisors to develop means of celebrating successes – “the champions”			Strategy Rationale This is a recommendation from the American Humane Association review in response to the staff perception that although the organization values safety of the children, it sometimes feels punitive in the perceived focus on identifying problems (lack of timeliness, etc) rather than successes.			
Milestone	10.1.1 Identify key performance measures and benchmarks		Timeframe	October – December 2004	Assigned to	Internal CWS workgroup
	10.1.2 Identify barriers to achieving performance			January – March 2004		Internal CWS workgroup
	10.1.3 Develop and implement a way of highlighting and advertising successes			April – May 2004		Internal CWS workgroup

Strategy 10. 2 Share reports, new initiatives, programs, community collaborations with workers		Strategy Rationale This is a recommendation from the American Humane Association review which found lack of staff understanding of the bigger picture of CWS policies and procedures			
Milestone	10.2.1 Share the Self-Assessment, the Self-Improvement Plan, the Children’s Action Plan, and the American Humane Association (AHA) review	Timeframe	October 2004	Assigned to	CWS Program Administrators
	10.2.2 Discuss CWS redesign and the AHA review at CWS all-staff meeting		November 2004		CWS Program Administrators and Supervisors
	10.2.3 Invite staff input and participation in implementation of SIP, Children’s Action Plan, and AHA recommendations		December 2004		CWS Program Administrators and Supervisors
Improvement Goal 11.0 Improve the quality of supervision and management within CWS					
Strategy 11. 1 Improve content knowledge of Program Administrators and Supervisors		Strategy Rationale This is a recommendation from the American Humane Association Review, which found that sometimes managers and supervisors don’t have strong background in the content area they are supervising.			
Milestone	11.1.1 Establish Supervisory Professional Development Workgroup including CWS Program Administrators and Supervisors and Staff Development with purpose of improving quality of supervision and management	Timeframe	October – December 2004	Assigned to	CWS Program Administrators and Supervisors, Staff Development
	11.1.2 Identify strengths and weaknesses of knowledge and training in areas of (1) program content – CWS laws and regulations; (2) child abuse and neglect prevention and intervention including risk factors, protective factors, family dynamics, and community factors; (3) use of CWS/CMS; and (4) principles and practices of management and supervision including initial supervisory training for new supervisors.		January – March 2005		Supervisory Professional Development Workgroup

	11.1.3 Supervisors and Program Administrators trained on child welfare content areas they oversee including how to use CWS/CMS and on concepts and techniques of management and supervision		July - September 2005		Supervisory Professional Development Workgroup
Strategy 11.2 More Program Administrator support for supervisors		Strategy Rationale This is a recommendation from the American Humane Association review in response to the concern that PAs are not always available due to heavy workloads			
Milestone	11.2.1 Inventory meetings attended by PAs and Supervisors, and the purpose	Timeframe	October – December 2004	Assigned to	Program Administrators
	11.2.2 Identify areas where meetings can be reduced (for example, emailing the court roster) and revise meeting assignments for PAs and supervisors		January – June 2005		Program Administrators
	11.2.3 Review AHA recommendations regarding 360-performance evaluation and monthly performance evaluations		July - September 2005		Program Administrators
Strategy 11.3 More Supervisor support for social workers		Strategy Rationale This is a recommendation from the American Humane Association review in response to the concern that supervisors are not always available due to heavy workloads			
Milestone	11.3.1 Establish ongoing supervisor meeting for mutual support and training	Timeframe	October – December 2004	Assigned to	CWS Supervisors
	11.3.2 Set regular agenda item to include topical training		January – March 2004		CWS Supervisors
	11.3.3 Review AHA recommendations on meetings and identify ways to reduce time in meetings (for example, attending case staffing only as needed; rotating supervisor attendance)		April – May 2004		CWS Supervisors
Improvement Goal 12.0 Improve internal CWS communication.					
Strategy 12. 1 Develop a consistent method for making and communicating policy changes		Strategy Rationale This is a recommendation from the American Humane Association review in response to the concern that policy changes are no made in a uniform fashion			

Milestone	12.1.1 Establish workgroup to develop streamlined procedure for developing policies	Timeframe	October 2004	Assigned to	CWS Program Administrators
	12.1.2 Review AHA recommendations for developing and disseminating policy		November 2004		CWS Program Administrators
	12.1.3 Implement new system		December 2004		CWS Program Administrators
Strategy 12. 2 Disseminate meeting notes as appropriate		Strategy Rationale This is a recommendation from the American Humane Association review in order to improve internal communication; without written notes, workers who don't attend a meeting depend on verbal interpretations from other staff.			
Milestone	12.2.1 Identify meetings where information should be available to all staff -- PA/Supervisor meetings, all-Agency meetings, and other regularly scheduled or special meetings.	Timeframe	October – December 2004	Assigned to	CWS Program Administrators
	12.2.2 Assign note taker to take brief notes – synopsis of discussion, and decision/action. Excluding confidential or personnel information		January – March 2005		CWS Program Administrators
	12.2.3 Disseminate notes in systematic format to all CWS staff		January – March 2005		CWS Program Administrators
Strategy 12. 3 Update Red Book with current policies and procedures			Strategy Rationale This is a recommendation from the American Humane Association review in response to the concern that there is no centralized source of information on current policy and procedure.		
Milestone	12.3.1 Update Red Book	Timeframe	October – December 2004	Assigned to	CWS Program Administrators
	12.3.2 Develop system to keep Red Book updated, including assigning responsible staff		January – March 2005		CWS Program Administrators
	12.3.3 Disseminate Red Book		January – March 2005		CWS Program Administrators

Improvement Goal 13.0 Ensure consistent social worker training					
Strategy 13. 1 Require new workers to complete Core Training within a specified time			Strategy Rationale This is a recommendation from the American Humane Association review because sometimes workloads prevent staff from receiving necessary training. We need centralized training, a rotation plan to cross-train staff, and the identification of core competencies.		
Milestone	13.1.1 Develop policy and timeline for completing Core Training	Timeframe	October – December 2004	Assigned to	CWS Program Administrators
	13.1.2 Identify and address barriers		January – February 2005		CWS Program Administrators
	13.1.3 Educate staff and supervisors on policy		March – June 2005		CWS Program Administrators
Strategy 13. 2 Establish and enforce reduced caseloads for staff while in training			Strategy Rationale This is a recommendation from the American Humane Association review because sometimes workloads prevent staff from receiving necessary training.		
Milestone	13.2.1 Explore whether mentors or skilled staff could be floaters to cover caseloads of staff in training	Timeframe	October – December 2004	Assigned to	CWS Program Administrators
	13.2.2 Review feasibility of establishing a training unit for new staff to learn state and county policies and procedures and skills including CWS/CMS and writing court reports		January – March 2005		CWS Supervisors
	13.2.3 Implement floaters, training unit, or other mechanism to ensure lower caseloads while staff are in training.		April – July 2005		CWS Supervisors
Improvement Goal 14.0 Balance CWS workloads					
Strategy 14. 1 Hire clerical and administrative support			Strategy Rationale This is a recommendation from the American Humane Association review as workload was identified as one of the top two concerns by both supervisors and social workers, especially for FR staff.		

Milestone	14.1.1 Review and assess clerical needs	Timeframe	October – December 2004	Assigned to	CWS Program Administrators
	14.1.2 Hire temporary clerical support and budget for permanent support as needed		January – June 2005		CWS Program Administrators
	14.1.3 Hire permanent clerical support		July - September 2005		CWS Program Administrators
Strategy 14. 2 Develop and implement standard practices for social workers, supervisors, orientation and training		Strategy Rationale This is a recommendation from the American Humane Association review; workload was identified as one of the top two concerns by both supervisors and social workers, especially for FR staff.			
Milestone	14.2.1 Establish systems review committee with membership from line staff, supervisors, and program administrators.	Timeframe	October – December 2004	Assigned to	CWS Program Administrators
	14.2.2 Review current practices for orientation and training including tools used for case review, performance review, etc and prioritize for revision		January – March 2005		CWS Systems Review Committee
	14.2.3 Revise select practices and tools		April - August 2005		CWS Systems Review Committee
Notes: The American Humane Association review was commissioned by HSA administration in order to identify areas needing improvement, and the recommendations are included in this set of goals.					
Describe systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goal. These changes are all systemic, internal to HSA and CWS.					
Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals. As indicated above, many of these systemic improvements require staff training, including reviewing and revising current training.					
Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals. HSA administration is an important partner in supporting these systemic changes from the top.					
Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals. It is important to be allowed flexibility in use of CWS allocation in order to target resources on areas of greatest need.					

Template 6. Systemic Factor: Probation Department Resources and Procedures					
County’s Current Performance: Probation identified three issues in its self-assessment: the need for options for youth in detention or who violate the terms of home supervision; the need for more community resources for youth who need intensive supervision; and the need for streamlined paperwork requirements.					
Improvement Goal 15.0 Develop and expand programs for youth who are taken into custody (in detention) or violate terms of home supervision (after commitment)					
Strategy 15. 1 Expand interventions that are alternatives to incarceration for youth who are taken into custody or who violate the terms of their home supervision.		Strategy Rationale Juvenile offenders realize that there is limited space for them pre-adjudication or if they violate terms of home supervision, which reduces the deterrent effect. There are current programs which are effective and could be expanded with additional resources (staff and facilities). For example, the Day Reporting Center (DRC) could be made available preplacement.			
Milestone	15.1.1 Identify current programs that can be expanded	Timeframe	October – December 2004	Assigned to	Probation
	15.1.2 Identify resource needs for program expansion		January – June 2005		Probation
	15.1.3 Identify potential sources of funding including grants		July – September 2005		Probation
Strategy 15. 2 Identify potential new programs and interventions		Strategy Rationale			
Milestone	15.2.1. Review best practices from other communities and literature	Timeframe	October – December 2004	Assigned to	Probation
	15.2.2 Identify potential new programs		January – June 2005		Probation
	15.2.3 Determine staff and facilities resources		July – September 2005		Probation

Improvement Goal 16.0					
Develop community resources for youth who need intensive supervision					
Strategy 16. 1			Strategy Rationale		
Identify, assess, and develop new local programs for youth involved in a delinquent lifestyle			Few local programs are available for youth needing intensive supervision because of a delinquent lifestyle choice		
Milestone	16.1.1	Timeframe	October – December 2004	Assigned to	Probation and CWS
	Identify currently available local programs		January – June 2005		Probation and CWS
	16.1.2		July – September 2005		Probation and CWS
	Identify program resource needs				
	16.1.3				
	Identify funding sources				
Strategy 16. 2			Strategy Rationale		
Explore potential counseling and mental health resources for Probation youth			Even Probation youth who do not have a diagnosable mental illness and thus are not eligible for public mental health services may benefit from counseling and support groups including anger management and conflict resolution		
Milestone	16.2.1	Timeframe	October – December 2004	Assigned to	Probation and Mental Health
	Assess counseling needs of Probation wards		January – June 2005		Probation and Mental Health
	16.2.2		July – September 2005		Probation and Mental Health
	Identify potential resources in the community				
	16.2.3				
	Determine the cost of additional services and potential funding resources such as grants				
Improvement Goal 17.0					
Improve Probation Department current practices relative to out of home placements					
Strategy 17. 1			Strategy Rationale		
Train Probation Officers how to identify and assess kinship placements			Probation officers are not trained to identify or assess relative homes, and as a result sometimes have difficulty in identifying and making relative placements for youth		
Milestone	17.1.1	Timeframe	October – December 2004	Assigned to	Probation and CWS
	Identify placement-related training needs of Probation Officers		January – June 2005		Probation and CWS
	17.1.2		July – September 2005		Probation and CWS
	Develop curriculum and model for placement-related training				
	17.1.3				
	Probation officers trained on how to do home assessments and identify appropriate placements				

Strategy 17. 2 Explore feasibility of establishing a Placement Unit within Probation			Strategy Rationale There are 60-70 Probation youth in placement and it may be effective to assign specialized workers to this caseload		
Milestone	17.2.1. Review pros and cons of a separate Placement Unit	Timeframe	October – December 2004	Assigned to	Probation and Mental Health
	17.2.2 Develop planning for staffing and management		January – June 2005		Probation and Mental Health
	17.2.3 Implement Placement Unit if appropriate		July – September 2005		Probation and Mental Health
Improvement Goal 18.0 Improve internal systems including documenting and communicating case information					
Strategy 18. 1 Improve processing of court documents for Court, Deputy Public Defender, Deputy District Attorney, or private attorney			Strategy Rationale Streamlining of document process will improve communication and service delivery.		
Milestone	18.1.1. Set up short term work group to improve document process	Timeframe	October – December 2004	Assigned to	Probation
	18.1.2 Review current system including interviews with clerical staff		January – March 2005		Probation
	18.1.3 Develop and implement recommendations for improvement		April – June 2005		Probation
Strategy 18. 2 Provide Probation Officers read-access to CWS/CMS for cases with dual jurisdiction			Strategy Rationale Probation Officers need to see the history, case plan, etc for cases in dual jurisdiction		
Milestone	18.2.1 Review law and statute	Timeframe	October – December 2004	Assigned to	HSA
	18.2.2 Identify best practices in other counties		January – June 2005		HSA and Probation
	18.2.3 Develop recommendations		January – June 2005		HSA and Probation
Strategy 18. 3 Develop system for youths in dual jurisdiction between Probation and CWS		Strategy Rationale At this time there are no youth under dual Probation/CWS jurisdiction, as the County has a system to assess potential dual jurisdiction cases and assign them either to Probation or CWS. Pending legislation would require a new approach to dual jurisdiction youth, and it will be necessary to revise the current system if it is signed into law.			

Milestone	18.3.1 Review current practices	Timeframe	June – June 2005	Assigned to	Probation and CWS
	18.3.2 Review practices in other counties		July – August 2005		Probation and CWS
	18.3.3 Develop a report on current local practice and practices in other counties		September 2005		Probation and CWS

Improvement Goal 19.0 Initiate planning for potential future needs					
Strategy 19. 1 Explore feasibility of working toward the establishment of a Family Court			Strategy Rationale Juvenile offenders need to be seen in the context of the entire family. Family Courts have attorneys and judges who specialize in working with troubled youth and their families, and focus on identifying solutions that will work best to prevent the youth from further trouble, which means addressing family issues as well.		
Milestone	19.1.1 Establish a Family Court exploratory work group	Timeframe	October – December 2004	Assigned to	Probation
	19.1.2 Review and identify best practices from other communities such as Brooklyn		January – July 2005		Probation
	19.1.3 Develop a report on findings		August – September 2005		Probation
Strategy 19. 2 Explore the feasibility of a Children’s Assessment Center for Probation youth including 601 (status) offenses and CWS youth, including a multidisciplinary assessment and review team			Strategy Rationale Troubled youth often have multifaceted problems and will benefit from a multidisciplinary focus on their needs, providing access to multiple professional perspectives and resources.		
Milestone	19.2.1. Establish a work group to look at Children’s Assessment Center	Timeframe	October – December 2004	Assigned to	Probation and CWS
	19.2.2 Review and identify best practices from other communities		January – July 2005		Probation and CWS
	19.2.3 Develop a report on findings		August – September 2005		Probation and CWS

Strategy 19. 3 Begin to plan for a feasibility study to increase juvenile hall beds for committed youth		Strategy Rationale By 2010, Juvenile Hall will need more beds for committed youth			
Milestone	19.3.1 Establish work group	Timeframe	October – December 2004	Assigned to	Probation and CWS
	19.3.2 Look at data and review projections		January – July 2005		Probation and CWS
	19.3.3 Develop preliminary plan		August – September 2005		Probation and CWS
Notes:					
Describe systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goal. Although HSA has an outstationed worker at Probation, and the departments have a good working relationship, addressing systemic factors will require further and ongoing collaboration.					
Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals. Training will be required so that staff understand the new procedures to be developed for documenting and communicating case information. Cross-training for Probation staff regarding placement and the use of CWS/CMS will also be needed.					
Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals. HAS and Probation will work closely on these goals, in collaboration with the Courts.					
Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals. Probation Officers who share jurisdiction with CWS need access to CWS/CMS.					